



R.R. “Bob” Greive

R.R. “Bob” Greive began his political career in 1946 at the age of twenty-seven when he won his first election for the state senate. A Democrat from West Seattle representing the Thirty-Fourth District, Greive quickly moved up in his party’s leadership ranks. He was an active campaigner and fundraiser for fellow Democrats and ultimately served sixteen years as the Senate majority leader. Greive’s attention to detail and dedication to his political goals also made him a master of the redistricting process. Over three decades he served as “Mr. Redistricting” for the Democrats in the Legislature.

Read the full text of an interview with Senator Greive, [*R.R. “Bob” Greive: An Oral History*](#), on the Oral History Program’s Web site.

CHAPTER 11

REDISTRICTING: 1971-1974

Ms. Boswell: We've talked about different redistricting efforts and I wondered about the redistricting effort that began in the early 1970s. When you finished in 1965 with redistricting, did you think you were finished with this whole issue?

Senator Greive: No. We knew we had to come back.

Ms. Boswell: And why was that?

Sen. Greive: Well, because of one man, one vote, and we have to do it every ten years. There was no other mechanism at that time set up for doing it, and actually the legislators didn't want another mechanism set up because they were afraid of what it would do. I mean, finally after the third time, they accepted it.

Ms. Boswell: So how did this 1970s redistricting effort begin?

Sen. Greive: Well, I think a number of factors brought it to that conclusion. The whole AFL-CIO promoted it, and there were an awful lot of other things that happened. Redistricting just isn't popular to the public. They figure you're only down there looking out for yourselves. We accuse them and they accuse us, and so pretty quickly it degenerated down

to a bunch of pigs fighting.

Ms. Boswell: Did the census—the 1970 census—have much to do with it?

Sen. Greive: We were required to do it by census, and the census comes out every ten years and that's what drives the wagon, so to speak.

Ms. Boswell: Can you lay out for me the sides or issues that developed in terms of this last redistricting, then?

Sen. Greive: Well, of course you understand that's the last redistricting that we'll ever do—that the Legislature tried to do because now we've got a commission. I don't know if that's any better or any worse, but it's out of the hands of the Legislature.

This particular one was marked by the same problem we had before. I never could get the Republicans to put all their cards on the table. To be perfectly honest, there was always a hidden agenda all the time. We thought we had, at one point, the thing all negotiated, and we all agreed—I remember Bailey saying we better get the governor to vote on this. The governor said, "I have to have," I think it was, "one more senator." He said, "I'll veto it unless I get one more senator." He was just that cold about it.

Well, what are you going to do? Evans just blew it sky high. I started looking at it and saying, "Well, if you make a little change here, a little change there, or if you do this or that..." But see, we'd been negotiating for weeks. He just blew it completely out of the saddle on a Sunday afternoon, as I recall. Bailey and I went over to the house and talked to him and were just sitting there in the house in the conference room. So, it was a political question all the way, as far as he's concerned.

Ms. Boswell: Now, had you put together a

similar office and team as you had in past redistricting?

Sen. Greive: Yes, and actually I've got a little interesting story on that. When we did it we, we thought we had to reach across party lines because the Republicans had a majority. We had lots of votes in the Senate—we had twenty-nine to twenty or something—but in the House it was fifty-one Republicans to forty-eight Democrats or something like that. I think that would have to be it—there're ninety-nine House members. We'd always be struggling to get some of them to come over, and we put on an open house. We would openly discuss it with them. Our worst enemy could come over wanting to know anything, and we'd tell him, "Sit down." We'd go over it.

By that time we had the conference room downstairs right next to my little office. I had an office upstairs with the official office, but then I've always had the little cubbyhole that I used all for ten to fifteen years. Right next to it, I had the whole conference room where we had maps laid out and hung up and on reels and that sort of thing, so that they could take them down and look at them as well as the overlays. Somebody said that we were being secretive, and I got pretty sore because the Republican headquarters was about five miles away, and they weren't even permitted in to look at it, the average Republican. They might let you see your district but that's it. We were letting them see everything, and I had a sign made—or maybe I made it myself—it said, "Redistricting Clinic. Open to the public." We plastered that on the door—it was a good size sign. So, our attitude was anybody who wanted to look at what our plans were could.

We were not necessarily telling them, but we had a plan ready to go, and we'd show it to them. We often discussed the details, in the meantime, because I was always convinced that if I only had to please the people

sitting in the seats, I could please them. But if somebody had a hidden agenda—that wanted to take over or make a game—we weren't going to make it. What I preached the other times is that if you're going to redistrict the people sitting in the seats, you'd better take care of the people sitting in the seats, or you're not going to get the votes.

This is for not for public consumption, but I mean, it just doesn't follow one man, one vote and all these phrases and things. It was just window dressing, that's all. The Republicans had the same problem that I did; they couldn't put a plan together. In fact, when they did do a plan together, I remember I saw it the first time, and I was laughing at what they did. There's an article written by Richard Larson, who was never a political friend of mine, although he was a nice guy to talk to. He talks about the fact that they showed me the Republican plan and then he said:

[Senator Greive reads from an article by Richard Larsen published in the Seattle Times]

Moments later, outside the Speaker's office, Senator Greive, Democrat mastermind of the Democratic redistricting, sat on the couch to examine the Republican plan. Greive said, with a giggle, 'This isn't a plan; this is a joke. They want to repeal the election, that's all.' He scans the map and gives a running commentary to the gathering of mostly reporters. 'They kind of put Francis and Dore in the same district, that's Senator Francis, Senator Dore.' He points out the Thirty-second District of Senator Pete Francis, a Democrat, has been stretched across the Seattle's North End to gobble up the Forty-fifth District, which is Senator Fred Dore, another Democrat. Still examining the map, with rising emotion, Greive asked, 'Where did they put Herr? They didn't just leave him out; he has to be some place.' The reference was to Senator Gordon

Herr from the West Seattle District who served faithfully in the Democratic infantry in the Senate. He said, 'Aaaaah! Herr is found; his home lies in the newly formed District Five. The district meanders along the water, salt waterfront, King County; it's a lovely place to live but it's a tough place for a Democrat to find votes.'

Grieve said loudly, 'Look here.' He points to the Thirty-third District, 'Another waterfront trip from Seward Park along the shores of Lake Washington.' It would accommodate two House seats but the boundaries include five incumbent Democrats: John Bagnariol, John Merrill, Bud Shinpoch, John O'Brien, William Chatalas. Representative Brown, a principal author of the plan, joined Grieve's conversation group and Grieve asks him why Dore's senatorial district in the North End disappeared. Brown said, 'It didn't disappear. We merely moved it to Enumclaw.' Brown alludes to Dore's move last year from his home in the Thirty-seventh District to the North End, where he won an election skillfully riding the property tax revolt. 'Senator Dore has moved before and we thought he might not mind moving again. Besides Enumclaw is a lovely place to live.'

Ms. Boswell: Tongue in cheek. And that was the article from April 27, 1971.

Sen. Greive: So you know it. We got to the point where I knew the districts almost by looking where they were and the shapes because we'd been through all that. In that case they didn't set out to draw a plan; they set out to destroy it and propose something we couldn't accept. That was typical of what they would do.

Ms. Boswell: Now when you say "they," who was primarily behind it?

Sen. Greive: Well, I don't know, Gorton was

now Attorney General, but he was masterminding the whole thing, I think. Some things I don't know, and obviously they didn't tell me, and so I going to put some on the record. I'd like to be sure I'm accurate, but I always thought that Slade Gorton was running it and Evans, of course. Evans didn't sit down and do all the things, but Evans is a smart guy, and he knew a lot about the districts, too. But I didn't feel I was negotiating with the House; I felt I was negotiating with the hierarchy.

Ms. Boswell: Who was the spokesperson for the House?

Sen. Greive: It was Brown. Brown was the chairman, but he wasn't in control of anything. He wasn't in the position to make changes.

Ms. Boswell: What about George Prince?

Sen. Greive: Well, George Prince is the front man. As I look at it, he liked the idea of getting publicity and having his name in the paper and so did his wife, and he felt that he was a respectable Democrat. He didn't have to be with us working types, and he could sit in Mercer Island and sort of do the whole thing. Not only that, when he brought his actions he got paid, because if you're successful then the Court will put in a bill, and he got money. Now, I don't think money motivated him, though. I think he just liked the idea of being one of the major players in the state of Washington.

Ms. Boswell: He had previously been involved in the very early League of Woman Voters suit; hadn't he been an attorney or had some sort of involvement in it?

Sen. Greive: Yes, he was involved with them all the way along. Now I never met George Prince. I wouldn't know what he looks like if he walked through the door, so all I know is

what I read in the papers. People told me they used him to support their plans essentially.

Ms. Boswell: And whom did you have working on your team this time?

Sen. Greive: Well, I had Cough, Steve Cough. He was out of the University of Washington. He's got a Master's Degree and he doesn't work in this particular field. I think mostly he runs computers and that sort of thing. But he was a real genius when it came to statistics, and he kind of ran the show for me. But we had a number of other people; for one thing, a lot of people became interested in redistricting. Workers down there—just employees if they had free time—they came over and helped us work. We always had a crew down there. Everybody that became interested—it caught up a certain number of people—and it was just something to do. Late at night they could go down there, and they could have fun moving districts around and wondering what happened. They all had contacts, and they all had people in the area they would ask what they thought about their district and find that out. Probably several of them were reporting to the House, but we didn't care—I mean the House Republicans and the Democrats.

Then we had Gary Grant from the House; he became involved. Gary Grant seemed to be more interested in having his name on something and pushing me around than he was interested in redistricting. He only wanted the Grant plan, but his plan looked pretty much like what we were doing. But we didn't object when he came over. We were glad to talk to him, too. I felt that was the only way he could do it.

Ms. Boswell: In terms of your career at that time, what percentage of time did you end up having to spend on redistricting?

Sen. Greive: Enormous amounts of time, and

I mean enormous. We worked days and weekends; we worked nights. We quit at ten or eleven o'clock, and I'd go out to the dances or clubs or wherever they were, have a few dances. I usually picked up my wife before I went, and we'd go out there for a while. But other than that most of the time was spent on it. We had some duties as far as keeping the agenda, but this redistricting got so important and had so massive an impact that it sort of held everything up. We worked on it for two years....

Ms. Boswell: I was going to say, it took about two years.

Sen. Greive: We had Cough—a new staff. He made a deal with the university to be released. He worked right around the clock. When we were out of session, he was still down there working.

Ms. Boswell: But what else happened? You had your plan that you had developed, and the Republicans had one.

Sen. Greive: We had several plans. If there was somebody who said they had an objection to something then we would make changes, but you just don't make a change in redistricting. You make a change, and then you find you have a whole massive other lot of changes to make because that changes the boundaries. We contended one hundred forty nine thousand people weren't counted actually. The master just didn't have the expertise that we had. I'm sure he didn't leave them out deliberately, but we put that into our appeal—that's one of the things we appealed on.

Ms. Boswell: Now, you mention the master, but let me step back for a minute and sort of get to the point where he comes into the story. So you've been working on this for a long

time, pretty much night and day through the session and outside of the session. Essentially, does it come to an impasse where you can't seem to agree? What happened?

Sen. Greive: Well, the Republicans would never agree, but they never say that it's hopeless. They make an issue out of it. I think the public was pretty disgusted with all of us working on redistricting. I don't think that it was popular then. I wish there was something we could do without getting into the newspapers or getting TV involved because every time they gave us publicity, even though they didn't say anything bad, they had us fighting and bickering. "They got a plan, and I got a plan," and the public didn't understand it. The public thinks it's easy: just go put them in a district someplace. They don't appreciate the differences. Now, the insiders do, when the AFL-CIO people would do it. I'm sure that the Boeing lobbyist would, for example, but it's a very thin layer of people who really know anything about redistricting or care. You get beyond that media circle, and they don't know—even the county officials. They may be sympathetic with us, in say Mason County or Pend Orielle or whatever, but they're not going to knock themselves out for redistricting. They run their own counties, and they're not too involved in it. It's like "a plague on both their houses."

Ms. Boswell: So what ultimately prompted Prince to file the lawsuit?

Sen. Greive: He began the first of the lawsuits and said we hadn't done our jobs. He saw a chance to make a public speech or two, so he filed it—and more power to him. It was a good thing rather than a bad thing, but after that he got a taste of the publicity, and you couldn't keep him out of things. He kept wanting to get in the middle of it every time. Now, I said I wouldn't recognize him if he walked in here,

but that doesn't mean I didn't see him in court. I did, but I forgot what he looks like now. But we weren't in court very much together. Once or twice.

Ms. Boswell: So, his first complaint was essentially what? Was that before you actually had started redistricting then?

Sen. Greive: Oh, we were working on it.

Ms. Boswell: You were working on it, but you just hadn't reached any kind of agreement?

Sen. Greive: So he filed it. He saw a chance to sort of be the white knight and that's politics. At that time he may have had other ambitions, too. I don't know. I always thought he wanted to end up with a judgeship or something, but he didn't.

Ms. Boswell: And so when he filed it, what were the immediate ramifications?

Sen. Greive: Well, we didn't take him seriously. You see Myron Borawick had done it before. The first person to do this was Borawick. He filed suit in the redistricting effort that began in 1962. Prince didn't come in until the second redistricting. By that time Borawick was representing the AFL-CIO. Borawick was a friend of mine; I didn't put him up to it. He had filed the case for a man named Thigpen who was a justice of the peace, out in his area, and the case was Thigpen versus the United States or what ever it was.

Ms. Boswell: *Thigpen v Meyers*.

Sen. Greive: Yes. Prince saw a chance to enhance his public acceptance. See, when you're a lawyer you don't need to worry when things are really awfully popular. He was on the popular side, so let's get it done. "The Legislature doesn't know what they're doing;

they're fighting. They can't do it, so I'll do it." So he was in a very popular position.

Ms. Boswell: And once he had filed it, how did that affect you? What happened then?

Sen. Greive: I don't think it affected us particularly. I think we'd have ended up in the same place anyway, but my problem was that by this time, Gorton had taken over and filed the lawsuit. He conspired—I call it—with Prince to kind of be a front. And looked at from my perspective, it appeared like that. Prince and Gorton seemed to be tagging along together, and he would use—he would quote Prince—and Gorton was kind of independent, so when he filed the lawsuit, well, the lawsuit bothered us. He asked the court to accept the plan and—first of all—we didn't know he filed a lawsuit. We were never given any notice of it.

I remember specifically that May 5, I think it was, or May 6, 1971, we met with Gorton, and we were pretty upset because we found that they'd been talking about plans and whole lot of things. I can't comment on it honestly because I wasn't part of the discussion, and we pointed out to Gorton that he was the lawyer for the state of Washington and the Senate was a part of the mechanism, and we should be kept informed.

We were sure we that we would be kept informed, but he didn't keep his word. On May 5 then, we found out that Prince filed and the Attorney General had moved to intervene; he wasn't in the original action. So, that night we had a terrible time because Gorton kept saying it was the "Gorton strategy." Actually, it was that he and Evans had finally come up with a governor's plan that they would present. The governor's plan, as the official plan of the state of Washington, was the one he hoped to get the court to accept. That official plan, of course, was not in our favor—the Democrats—and I think that was his strategy.

Of course, he was going to keep us from knowing what it was about, so we weren't even parties. We didn't get papers served on us; we didn't know what was going on. So, then we went and got the court to put us in as a party so that we could be informed. Until that point, we were out of it. They were going to have a plan, adopt it, and send it to the Supreme Court, and we would be just up a creek, as I see it.

And it very well could have been Prince's plan because Prince was part of the negotiations, but since I wasn't part of the negotiations I don't know exactly.

Ms. Boswell: Who was really behind that?

Sen. Greive: Well, what I strongly suspect is that Prince and Gorton were working together. But I only suspect; I don't have proof that I know of.

Ms. Boswell: Now, there had been a lot of changes in terms of the population of the state in that period.

Sen. Greive: And in our plans we got the compromises. Why, we had some that were under and over in terms of numbers, there's no question about that. I was the first to say that it wasn't perfect, but we did a lot better job each time we did it as far as population is concerned because even when they were all done, they missed all kinds of counts. We showed it to them—affidavits that were in the lawsuit.

Ms. Boswell: What were they actually hoping to do with their suit then?

Sen. Greive: They wanted their own plan. In other words, they wanted a partisan plan. They wanted to adopt it. They didn't care that the Senate was thirty-two to nineteen or thirty-one to nineteen in favor of the Democrats.

They wanted to have their plan, not our plan.

Ms. Boswell: Now, it seems like I read, too, that there was another provision of Prince's motion that said something about declaring the 1965 law unconstitutional.

Sen. Greive: Yes.

Ms. Boswell: What was that all about?

Sen. Greive: Well, he didn't want them to just put it over another year. He wanted to knock it out so we had to redistrict. That was a good play.

Ms. Boswell: All right, so the 1965 law just was the old redistricting?

Sen. Greive: Yes.

Ms. Boswell: And so he just wanted to get rid of that?

Sen. Greive: Ten years, every ten years, but we were five years into it before we got it done, and I don't think it was popular with the public. I mean, I'm not against Prince particularly.

Ms. Boswell: Now, in going through Prince's particular motion, something also comes up under representation of minorities.

Sen. Greive: I don't know what Prince has to say about it right now, but I know that when their plan was done—the master's plan—they didn't represent the minorities. We submitted a series of affidavits—very substantial series of affidavits—by people who for one reason or another knew a piece of it. We didn't know—most of the people didn't have a picture of the whole, but they know a part of it.

Ms. Boswell: We jumped the gun here a little. How did the master get involved? How did that all come about?

Sen. Greive: Well, finally, I got to thinking we were going to make it; in fact, I was very hopeful, and the newspaper articles at the time would reflect that. I was so focused, and I could see that we were very close; we were at the point where we could make a compromise. Time after time, we had it almost there, and then it would blast apart. I had no idea that—well, I had an idea, but I didn't have any proof—that somebody was frustrating it. Now, looking back on it, I was duped, but I really did think we had it. I didn't want to go and have the court do something, when I thought we had it done ourselves because I had the dubious task of protecting the members. You can't be the floor leader and majority leader and then sell them all down the road.

So I had to protect the people who were elected in office, but every time I got to the point where I thought we had it, why, then there would be somebody who'd throw a monkey wrench into it. It was their people who did it, and then we'd have to start over and make another try because they'd bring up some new problem. And we'd try to solve that problem, and so, little by little, we knew all of the problems. We'd talk about a problem, and we'd know right now what they're talking about. They'd tell us there was a problem in Gig Harbor or Spokane or Davenport or Walla Walla, and we'd try to go out and solve it. Sometimes we could bring the two sides together, but, you see, I think we have forty-nine senators and then ninety-nine House members. You've got an awful lot of people to please, and you can't get too many of them mad.

Ms. Boswell: But then all of a sudden—

Sen. Greive: Well, we always came out politically. My thought was if we kept the people happy that were sitting in the seats, we'd come out politically. I didn't think we had to go to unusual tricks to eliminate people, or we'd just come out to do this or that.

Ms. Boswell: But then when Prince filed his suit, did that stop the negotiation on the Senate side?

Sen. Greive: Well, it didn't hurt us; it helped us. But the thing was, see, the only two parties before the court were Prince and Gorton, and the rest of us are excluded, including the AFL-CIO, the Grange, and so forth. Why then, that's what the court hears. Then they make a deal and negotiate a settlement, and that's it. They can negotiate Prince's plan. Prince would be happy with that, and the court would accept it, and it would be redistricted. It was a way to get around us.

Ms. Boswell: So, how does the master come in then?

Sen. Greive: Well, the master was appointed by the court because we couldn't agree. I kept thinking we could because what they would do is, they'd talk about agreeing, but every time it got close, well, then I'd feel softness on the other side. "Well now, I think I've got a chance," and I got pledges from people saying they would vote for it, but they didn't have nerve enough to vote for it when the time came down to it. Of course, I had accounted for that. I always knew that most of them would be that way. I always figured a few of them might stand up, but they never had nerve

enough to stand up against the leadership.

Ms. Boswell: So these would be primarily Republicans?

Sen. Greive: Primarily Republicans, but then, the times the Democrats were in control, then I had to contend with Grant and O'Brien, who thought we had given up too much in 1965, although we had done very well politically after that in the elections. I don't know what they were thinking about.

I'm convinced that O'Brien wanted to be the one that protected his people. He had a handful of people that made him Speaker three times, and I don't blame him for that—that's the world. You live in a realistic world when you're trying to put everything together. You can't go design something that won't work. You had to get the votes.

Ms. Boswell: But would you still say that you thought your plan was as non-partisan as you could make it?

Sen. Greive: Well, I'm not saying non-partisan. It ended up protecting the people in the seats, but I think it was bi-partisan in that both sides could win and have a say in the matter. I'm sure of that because I felt that I couldn't go too far, or else nobody would accept it. If I went outrageously far—well, I didn't try to. In other words, I didn't object when they made a deal for Thomas Swayze so that he could live across the Narrows and have a little strip of land. Why, I figured that he's entitled to it, if that's the way they wanted it. It didn't hurt anything. He was the Speaker of the House after all.